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United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Region Four

Boise National Forest

A Program Designed by Forest Employees...
...for Forest Employees.

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The Mentoring Concept

How and why do adults learn? This question was a focus of the Boise National Forest's pilot mentoring program. A formalized mentoring program that is open to all employees is adult education that produces a wholistic, yet individualized approach to learning in the workplace.

Evidence abounds that adults who work with mentors grow in their own sense of intellectual competence. They experience self-esteem, a sense of purpose, goals and autonomy, while also feeling part of the system, the "organizational family."

For purposes of clarity, a brief description of the term mentoring will be provided. In Greek mythology, Mentor was the servant of Ulysses to whom the King entrusted the care and training for his son, Telemachus. Mentor's responsibilities covered the personal and professional aspects of Telemachus' life. Today, one thinks of the term Mentor as indicating a higher ranking, influential senior organizational member who provides support, challenge, and vision for the professional being mentored, the mentee.

While the concept is not new, the idea of providing structural opportunities for mentoring to those who were not presently benefiting from it is, in itself, a turning point.

This guide reflects the forest's mentoring participants' common thinking: the options, issues, and opportunities for our mentoring program, which has proven remarkably and demonstratively effective in the lives of these forest employees.

Process

The program design was started in June of 1990. A strategy team was formed. This diverse committee helped in the design of the poster, district presentations on the Program, and the pre-testing of the recruitment questionnaire.

Selection and matching occurred in September of 1990. Training for the pairs was offered in November and May, and a year end evaluation was done in October. The November training was a full day, focusing on the content of mentoring. The May training was a monitoring session, designed to solicit input and feed-back on the process.

The final full day session offered in October focused on the process: what organizational processes facilitated or hindered mentoring. Both mentors and mentees filled out pages of suggestions recorded on flip charts, which were later integrated into future mentoring training sessions. They also completed a program critique. The findings were tabulated and presented to the Leadership Team.

The Need to Formalize

Issues expressed by district employees during the program presentations were formatted into a questionnaire that was sent out to all employees over the DG.

The pairs were matched based on the mentee's expressed need and the mentor's skill in addressing that need. A full day training session was conducted by the Mentoring Coordinator to ensure success for the

pairs and the program, because from day one there would be "shared expectations" that the mentee was responsible for their career goals, not the mentor. Seventy-five employees volunteered to participate in this initial program.

While it was acknowledged that informal mentoring was occurring in the workplace to a fortunate few, those majority not labeled "fast trackers" were less likely to find guidance, coaching and challenging assignments that encourage development.

Implementation of a formalized, voluntary mentoring program on the forest ensured that employees who took the responsibility could access the help needed for not just reaching their goals, but realizing their full potential.

Matching

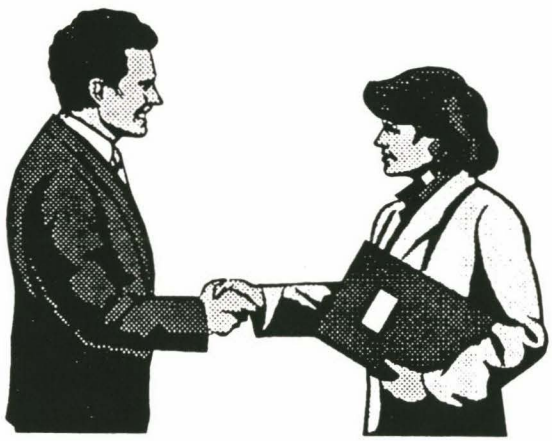
A formalized program where mentees are matched to mentors based on the mentee's expressed needs has proven to be a powerful one-on-one training/career counseling model. This model, open to **all** employees holds mentees accountable for setting their goals (not the mentors) which can be added to the IDP completed with the supervisor's knowledge and approval.

It has helped maintain an organizational climate in which employees feel they have an

investment in the agency and a responsibility for their own career development.

Pairs were matched not necessarily on similar values: rather than a "mirror image" of the mentee, mentors were carefully chosen who were committed to appreciating diverse values and could offer a challenging perspective on stated issue, bringing a new cognitive map with alternative viewpoints.

Cross-functional pairings were done which opened up communication across cliques and diminished stereotypes.



Neither gender, age, nor geographic location was a consideration, unless specified by the member of the pair. This benefited the participants, by providing self-insight, and personal development and benefited the organization by having professionals matched who may not have otherwise communicated with one another, facilitating sensitivity to departmental procedures and teamwork.

Pairs matched from different physical locations, e.g. district and SO, were arranged and proved successful: proximity did not appear to be a concern for the majority of participants. Attending the training sessions, use of the DG, on-site time for mentoring and respect for confidentiality appeared to be the variables that contributed to successful pairings.

Training

Training begins with a brief introduction by the mentoring coordinator and the forest supervisor. A guest speaker is invited (suggestion: use the local college) to address why formalization of the process is necessary. Someone who is knowledgeable in organizational development theory or psychology is recommended.

An icebreaker exercise follows to get the individual participants forming a group identity. A discussion by the group follows describing this exercise and how it pertains to clashing values, stereotypes and mentoring. Definitions, roles of mentors/mentees, stages of mentoring are described and two films are shown, delineating the supervisor, mentor, mentee roles, as well as discussing paradigm shifts.

Participants pair up with their

mentor/mentee and discuss the films, participate in several directed communication exercises and goal setting. The last forty-five minutes are devoted to discussion of the mentee's action plan. Participants are given a review of the day's session and a formal class critique to complete.

Total training averages about eight hours, and has presented **no** cost to the class members or the forest to date. The number of mentee per mentor was limited to one.

This decision was made due to the one-on-one nature of the exercises conducted in the training sessions, the limited amount of time available for mentoring and the desired effectiveness, which could be jeopardized by having too many mentees to counsel. The length of the relationship was initially set for one year and negotiated thereafter.

To "legitimize" the process, on site time of two hours per week was given for mentoring. The number of meetings averaged one per month for approximately two hours in length.

If a pairing proved dysfunctional, the mentoring coordinator re-assigned the participants in a timely fashion.

Conclusions

Overall interest in the mentoring program continues. Each session has had approximately 40 participants. The demand for the program has resulted in implementation on two additional forests, the Payette and the Sawtooth, with the Panhandle, Salmon and Targhee also requesting mentoring programs. To date, approximately 300 forest employees are participants.

The mentor/mentee career counseling model is intense because the learner is in direct contact with the trainer/mentor. Mentees get immediate feedback on success or failures. Mentors benefit, as well. Mentors can give mentees a reality check against their own assessment of their skills. In holding "what if" sessions in which mentees dissect a problem and generate alternatives, mentors can benefit by reevaluating their own approaches. They gain skills in interpersonal communications, enabling them to be better supervisors.

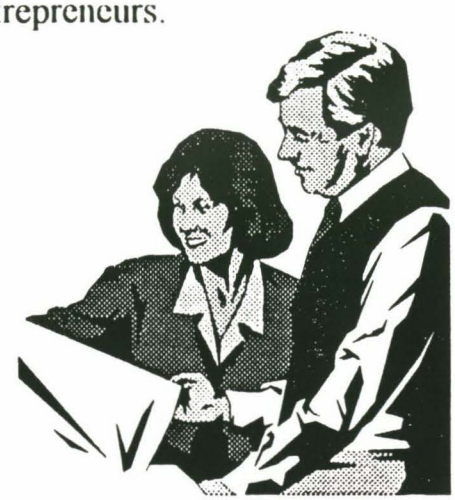
These dialogues which cross rank and functional boundaries can

create a workplace learning lab environment, by illustrating the importance of generating several viewpoints before solving a problem and presenting proposed solutions.

Theories are connected to practice to give the participants a real grasp of the total picture. The organization benefits by retaining and developing all of its people.

Communication channels open among employees at different levels, in different units, across cultural and professional barriers. Institutional knowledge is passed on.

The Idaho forests' mentoring programs are a "field tested" means of getting the organization in one's blood, leading to a committed, loyal workforce which identifies with the agency's mission, without losing its entrepreneurs.



Appendix A

MENTORING PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name: _____ Years with F.S. _____

2. Organizational Unit: _____ Telephone: _____

3. Grade/Series: _____

4. Would you like to participate in the BNF Mentoring Program?
   Yes ____ No ____

5. If not, why not?

   _____
   _____
   _____

   (If answer to No. 4 is no, do not proceed beyond this point. Please be sure and return the questionnaire to Barb Morgan.)

6. Which would you most prefer to be, a mentor or a mentee? _____

7. What characteristics do you prefer in a mentoring relationship? For example, work with a male or female, someone mobile or not mobile, minority, higher grade, same professional specialty, etc. Be specific.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

8. Would you like to mentor or be mentored by someone within your unit or outside your unit? Why?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

9. Are you presently involved in a mentoring relationship? Yes ___ No ___
   If yes, how long? _____

10. Would you like to name request someone to be your mentor/mentee?
    Yes ____ No ____ If yes, please give their name _____

11. Work History: (List title, series, grade, and dates of your current and last three jobs.)

_____

_____

_____

12. What do you see as the next logical step for career fulfillment?

_____

13. Educational background:
Number of years of education completed _____
Area of special emphasis _____

14. As a Mentee, what kind of assistance would benefit you most from a mentor? (e.g., personal development, career counseling, reconcile dual career question, time management, etc. Be specific)

_____

_____

_____

15. What personal characteristics or qualities make you especially suited to serve as a Mentor?

_____

_____

_____

16. Is having a Mentor beneficial for career advancement in the Boise National Forest?
Yes ____No ____

17. Do you feel that mobility in the work force (encouraging employees to relocate) is facilitative or nonfacilitative to a mentoring relationship?
_____facilitative _____nonfacilitative
Why?_____

_____

_____

18. Are you mobile? Yes____ No____ Locally____
Regionally____ Nationally____ Other____

19. Do you feel a Mentoring Program will have an impact on retention of employees?
Yes____ No____
If yes, in what areas? Clerical _____ Professional_____
Technical _____ Co-op Ed _____ What Grades_____
If no, why?_____

_____

_____

20. Do you plant to retire in 3 to 5 years? Yes____ No____
Would you take an early out, if offered? Yes____ No____ Do you feel an "early out" retirement practice will positively or negatively impact our Mentoring Program?
Positively____ Negatively
Explain_____

_____

21. Do you feel the Boise National Forest has been successful in retaining talented employees? Yes____ No____

22. If not, in what areas are we losing talent?_____

_____

and what grades?_____

23. What, if any, changes/improvements do you want to make in your career?

_____

24. Are you goal-oriented in your professional or personal goals or do you prefer to "let things happen?"

_____

25. What do you see as training needs for your professional development? Please list no more than three, in order of preference.

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire!

Appendix B

BOISE N.F. MENTORING WORKSHOP

AGENDA

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1992

8:00 - 8:30	Registration	
8:30 - 9:00	Agenda/Introductory Comments Barb Morgan	
9:00 - 9:40	Video - "The Business of Paradigms"	
9:40 - 10:00	Discussion of Video	Barb Morgan
10:00- 10:15	Break	
10:15-11:00	Mentoring - Why Bother?	Dr. Barr
11:00-11:15	Icebreaker/Bingo Mentors/Mentees	
11:15-12:00	Definitions: Mentor/Mentee; Roles; Kinds of Mentoring; Stages of Mentoring	Barb Morgan
12:00 -1:00	Lunch	
1:00 - 1:30	Video - "Who Can Help?"	
1:30 - 2:00	Requirements of Effective Mentoring	Barb Morgan
2:00 - 2:15	Break	
2:15 - 4:00	Skills Training: Communication; Listening; Action Plans	Barb Morgan
4:00 - 4:15	Review; Evaluation	
4:30	Adjourn	

Appendix C

MENTOR/MENTEE TRAINING WORKSHOP
BOISE NATIONAL FOREST
BOISE, IDAHO
DECEMBER 17, 1992

Name (Optional):

Unit:

Grade:

Highest education level achieved:

Mentor____ Mentee___

1. Was the course (Check one)

   Too Long ____? Just Right____? Too Short___?

   Comment:

2. Course Content:

   A. What was most beneficial? (Please explain):

   B. What was the least beneficial? (Please explain):

Appendix C

3. Do you think goals and objectives of the course were met? (Please explain):

4. Was the material understandable, useful, dated? (Please explain):

5. What is your recommedation for future sessions, i.e. additions, deletions,?

6. Would you recommend this course to other employees? Was it helpful for the Mentoring process?

Appendix D

EVALUATION OF MENTORS

NOTE: Response scale ranges from #1, a very slight extent to #5, a very large extent.

1. Mentor has shared history of his/her career with me.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Mentor initiated first contact with me. ____ Yes ____ No

3. Mentor encouraged me to try new ways of behaving in my job.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. I respect and admire my mentor.
   1 2 3 4 5

5. My mentor has demonstrated good listening skills in our conversations.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. Mentor has kept feelings and doubts shared with him/her in strict confidence.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. Mentor helped me meet new colleagues, apply for positions, join committees, etc.
   1 2 3 4 5

8. Mentor suggested specific training strategies for achieving career goals.
   1 2 3 4 5

9. Mentor invited me to join him/her for lunch, coffee breaks, or interacted with me socially outside of work.
   1 2 3 4 5

10. Rate the frequency of contact with your mentor, with #1 being low and #5 being high.
    1 2 3 4 5

Rate these variables from 1-5, #1 is low, #5 is high) in order of importance for successful mentoring.

11. Same professional background ____
    Geographic area (same District, for example) ____
    Gender ____ Age ____ Length of service ____
    Cultural background ____ Values ____
    Frequency of meetings ____ Communication skills ____

12. Formalization of mentoring on the BNF was needed to facilitate my access to organizational norms, culture, career counseling, etc.
    1 2 3 4 5

Appendix D

13. As a result of my experience with mentoring, I plan to continue involvement, either as a mentor and/or a mentee.
    1 2 3 4 5

14. I have felt supervisor support for mentoring activities.
    1 2 3 4 5

15. The BNF values human resource development, not just productivity.
    1 2 3 4 5

16. Mentoring is essential for human resource development and retention of talent.
    1 2 3 4 5

17. Mentoring has benefitted me personally and professionally.
    1 2 3 4 5

18. The mentoring coordinator was available to answer questions, and give guidance for mentoring.
    1 2 3 4 5

19. The mentoring coordinator's training sessions contributed to my understanding of mentoring.
    1 2 3 4 5

20. Mentoring has helped prepare me for future leadership roles in the Forest Service.
    1 2 3 4 5

Appendix E

EVALUATION OF MENTEES

NOTE: Response scale ranges from #1, a very slight extent to #5, a very large extent.

1. Mentee has shared history of his/her career with me.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Mentoring has benefitted me personally and professionally.
   1 2 3 4 5

3. Mentee was able to clarify some personal/ professional dilemmas.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. Mentee accepted and acted on my short-term/ long-term career guidance.
   1 2 3 4 5

5. Mentoring provided my mentee the opportunity to do self-assessment regarding relationship needs, personal resources, etc.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. Mentee did follow up on my feedback.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. Mentee is developing interpersonal skills needed to coach and counsel others.
   1 2 3 4 5

8. Mentee is developing the interpersonal skills needed to initiate and maintain relationships with senior colleagues and peers.
   1 2 3 4 5

9. Mentee and I interacted socially outside of work, e.g., lunch, etc.
   1 2 3 4 5

10. Rate the frequency of contact with your mentee, with #1 being low and #5 being high.
    1 2 3 4 5

11. It is important to have a mentee from my <u>same</u> District, professional background, educational level, etc
    1 2 3 4 5

12. Structurally, a "formalized" mentoring program is necessary for employee development and retention.
    1 2 3 4 5

13. I feel supervisor support for mentoring meetings.
    1 2 3 4 5

Appendix E

14. I feel the organization views mentoring as essential.
    1 2 3 4 5
15. The mentoring coordinator was available to answer questions, and give guidance for mentoring.
    1 2 3 4 5

16. Mentoring training sessions contributed to my understanding of mentoring.
    1 2 3 4 5

17. As a result of my participation in the mentoring program, I will continue involvement, either formally or informally.
    1 2 3 4 5

18. My mentee initiated the contacts with me.
    1 2 3 4 5

19. I kept feelings and doubts my mentee shared with me in strictest confidence.
    1 2 3 4 5

20. I provided my mentee exposure, visibility via attendance at meetings, presentations, task forces, meeting new colleagues.
    1 2 3 4 5

Appendix F

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